

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming. None of mainstream media covered any of the pre-convention Presidential debates. And any broadcast in the news has been limited to "sound bites", usually taken out of context. It's time for the people to take back control of the media and for the media to serve in the role of information sharing and not entertainment. It's time for the media to start reporting the news and to stop trying to create it.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy and freedom of the press is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

Deb Keenan
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